

Poetry.

YE ARE MY WITNESSES."

Tell me, pilgrim, faint and weary,
Trav'ling o'er this pathway dim,
Are you shedding light around you?
Are you witnessing for Him?

Do you try to tell the story
Of the precious Savior's love?
Are you hungering and thirsting
Evermore your love to prove?

Are you seeking out the lost ones
Whom the Master died to win?
Are you showing them the fountain
That can wash away their sin?

Are you looking by the wayside
For the weary ones who fall?
Do you take them to the Savior,
Who has promised rest for all?

Do you love to read the Bible?
Is it precious to your soul?
Are its treasures growing richer,
As you travel toward the goal?

Do you love to talk to Jesus
More than all the world beside?
Does it bring a holy comfort
With His people to abide?

Have you made a consecration
Of your time and earthly store?
If your all is on the altar,
Then the Master asks no more.

Thus, O pilgrim, should we journey
Showing forth the Master's praise,
With our lamps all trimmed and burning,
That the world may catch their rays.

—Selected.

Contributions.

CHURCH LITERATURE.

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A church without a literature is like a bird with clipped wings, or a boat with insufficient sails. It may get along after a fashion, but it is not likely to impress the mind, or command the respect, or materially modify the conditions of the world. Its influence upon society in general would hardly be appreciable. This present generation which very quickly, and for the most part justly, estimates the worth and weight of every candidate for the public ear and the public confidence, would set it down among the minor forces, and label it "Indifferent."

Why? Because a message to the world as important as that which the church is supposed to carry should be set down in fit, strong, well considered form, and thereby be far removed from the inaccuracies and fluctuations of traditional and oral statement.

It is this very principle which has given us the written Scriptures. The Gospels of the four Evangelists; and Paul's immortal letters were the tracts of the prim-

itive church. When the Elders and Presbyters of Ephesus, or Corinth, or Rome were asked by some learned inquirer for the authoritative statements of their doctrine, they were not at a loss for an answer.

It is true that we have the same oracles, and that they are still supreme and incomparable, but the very different statements of doctrine deduced from them, and the not infrequent perversion of doctrine laying claim to their authority, render it necessary for the church to put in concrete and convenient form its understanding of the truth, not only that the earnest inquirer may be informed, but that the indifferent or the misled may be transformed into inquirers.

This is not a plea for a creed, for it is utterly impossible to compress the great ocean of truth into a little thimble mould of a human creed, but it is a plea for finger boards which shall point the wayfarer to that same great ocean of truth, instead of the stagnant pond of traditional error. Amid the multitude of contradictory finger boards the traveler is bewildered. Many will go wrong, but some will go right, and the honest finger board is justified thereby.

An intelligent, honest, earnest inquirer will listen to your most eloquent expounder for hours, and then ask you for the literature of your church, particularly its doctrinal literature. The reason is plain. He judges that if you have a doctrine worth a man's while to listen to, you have long since put it in permanent form. He judges further that if you really believe that you have a God's message, you will spare no effort or expense to bring it to the ears of the lost multitudes. He will justly reason that you will avail of all the engines of modern science and invention that in this substituted form your heralds may be sent to the ends of the earth, and their message flung upon every breeze, that it may whisper into every ear.

When therefore you make the hackneyed reply to this intelligent inquirer that the Bible is your literature, and that you have no other, his interest immediately vanishes, and he goes his way. All forms and all perversions of so-called christian faith claim the Bible for their foundation and therefore that is no longer an intelligent answer. As it has been transformed into a cloak of hypocrisy to hide theological frauds, the stranger may suspect that your case is not an exception. He may even go so far as to say to himself that since you felt the necessity of informing him that the Bible was your creed, the necessity actually existed in the absence of any living evidence thereof.

On the contrary if you put into his hands your own doctrinal and theological literature, his interest will be fully sustained, and he will investigate your claims as fully and as far as his estimate of their weight will lead him. The character of that literature will quickly decide him. If it is weak, superficial, hurried, cheap, inaccurate in its statement of facts; if it lacks dignity, thoroughness and force, it may satisfy the superficial mind, but it will not impress your intelligent inquirer.

A strong, thorough, exhaustive and convincing church literature cannot be had to order. It is a growth, frequently of several generations. First it must be founded upon a system of doctrine which in its last analysis, and before the bar of a trained and logical judgment, is capable of a respectable if not a triumphant defense. The most magnificent temple built upon the sand will fall, while a less pretentious structure founded upon a rock will stand. Be sure of the foundation; and be sure also that, whether justly or not, the world will guess that if you have not built up a respectable superstructure of apologetic and expository literature, the inference is that you have no adequate foundation upon which to build. Excuses may be allowed for lack of time, but lack of matter or lack of truth can hardly expect much indulgence at the hands of honest criticism.

In this particular an error in reference to a single point of doctrine, or a single item of practice will seriously discredit the whole system. If one of your claims, even though it be relatively of minor importance, fail of a full weight of authority, fail to pass the scrutiny of the severest logic, it weakens all your other claims in the mind of the investigator. He will reason that if you are palpably wrong in one particular, you may be more or less wrong in others. Your statements lose their authority, your deductions their weight, and your opinions their influence.

It is not difficult to recall systems of doctrine embodying distinctive articles of a most helpful, sound, biblical and catholic character, which, however, have been seriously crippled and rendered comparatively ineffectual and uninfluential by some indefensible tenet, like the fly in the pot of ointment. Men look down into the pot and do not see the aromatic ointment at all. They see only the fly. So it is that however strong, consistent, logical and beautiful the more important propositions of our theological system may be, one weak link in the chain of doctrine, damages it irretrievably.

We want a statement of doctrine or a system of theology which will attract strong men. They are much more diffi-